

## University of Groningen

### Psalm 106

Labuschagne, C.J.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

2011

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Labuschagne, C. J. (2011). *Psalm 106*. s.n.

**Copyright**

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

**Take-down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

# Psalm 106— Logotechnical Analysis

## Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#) and [Book IV](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the [Key to the charts](#).

## Specific features of Psalm 106

- In terms of both form and content, Psalm 106 is a sister psalm of Psalms 105 and 107. All three are episodic poems, being clearly structured by well-defined episodes from the history of early Israel. The *pièce de résistance* of Psalm 106 is what I call the apostasy passage, vs. 13-33, which constitutes the core of the poem.
- In much the same way as in Psalms 105 and 107-109, the author used a coda to conclude his poem (v. 47): in this case, a prayer phrased as a 'we-passage'.
- Unlike Psalm 105 and the great majority of psalms in Book III and Book IV – except Psalms 95 and 104 – Psalm 106 has a meaningful centre primarily on word level: the **17**-word arithmetic centre, vs. 23-24, at the heart of the apostasy passage.
- Precisely as Psalms 105 and 107, this psalm also contains a passage skilfully structured according to the mysterious compositional formula **34 = 19 + 15** (vs. 23-27).

## Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: || Canticle boundary: |

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-5 || 6-7, 8-9, 10-12 | 13-15, 16-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23 || 24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33 | 34-36, 37-39, 40-42 || 43-44, 45-46, 47 (4 cantos, 21 strophes, 50 verselines and 102 cola, excluding the doxology and (2x) *hallelu-yah*).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 16-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-29, 30-31, 32-33, 34-35, 36-37, 38-39, 40-41, 42-43, 44-46, 47 / 48 (23/24 strophes, 50/52 verselines, 102/105 cola, without (2x) *hallelu-yah*, but including the doxology – the numbers after the slash include the doxology).
- Labuschagne: 1-3 | 4-5, 6-7 || 8-9, 10-12 || 13-15, 16-18 || 19-20, 21-22 | 23-24, 25-27 || 28-29, 30-31, 32-33 || 34-36, 37-39 || 40-42, 43-44, 45-46, 47 / 48 (7 cantos, 20/21 strophes, 50/51 verselines, **104/107** cola, excluding (2x) *hallelu-yah* and the doxology; the numbers after the slash include the doxology).

## Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words in the central section (vs. 13-33); **d**: words in the framework.
- The words addressed to God are in **green**: vs. 4-7 and v. 47.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	תְּלִי־וִיחַ					
	1 הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי־טוֹבֵה	4	4			4
	כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ:	3		3		3
	Total, v. 1	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
2	2 מִי יִמְלֹל גְּבוּרֹת יְהוָה	4	4			4
	יִשְׁמִיעַ כָּל־תְּהִלָּתוֹ:	3		3		3
	Total, v. 2	7	= 4	+ 3	= 0	+ 7
3	3 אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁמְרֵי מִשְׁפָּטֵה	3	3			3
	עֲשֵׂה צִדְקָה בְּכָל־עֵת:	4		4		4
	Total, v. 3	7	= 3	+ 4	= 0	+ 7
	<b>Canticle I.1 Strophe 1 v. 1-3</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>= 11</b>	<b>+ 10</b>	<b>= 0</b>	<b>+ 21</b>

4	זָכַרְנִי יְהוָה בְּרָצוֹן עֲמִידָה^	4	4	4	4
vs. 4-7, Addressed to God	פָּקַדְנִי בִישׁוּעַתְּךָ :		2	2	2
5	לָרְאוֹת בְּטוֹכַת בְּחִירֶיךָ	5	3	3	3
	לְשֹׁמֵחַ בְּשִׂמְחַת גּוֹיָךְ^		3	3	3
	לְהַתְהַלֵּל עִם־נִחְלָתְךָ :		3	3	3
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 4-5		15	= 10 + 5	= 0 + 15
6	חָטְאוּנוּ עִם־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	6	3	3	3
	הָעוֹיְנוּ הִרְשָׁעְנוּ :		2	2	2
7*	אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמַצְרַיִם	7	2	2	2
	לֹא־הִשְׁכִּילוּ נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ		3	3	3
	לֹא זָכְרוּ אֶת־רַב חֲסָדֶיךָ^	8	5	5	5
	וַיִּמְרוּ עַל־יָם בַּיָּם־סוּף :		5	5	5
	Strophe 3 Total, v. 6-7		20	= 15 + 5	= 0 + 20
	Canticle I.2 Total, v. 4-7		35	= 25 + 10	= 0 + 35
	Canto I Total, v. 1-7		56	= 36 + 20	= 0 + 56
8	וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ^	9	3	3	3
	לְהוֹדִיעַ אֶת־גְּבוּרָתוֹ :		3	3	3
	Total, v. 8		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
9	וַיַּגְעַר בַּיָּם־סוּף וַיַּחַרְבֵּה^	10	4	4	4
	וַיּוֹלִיכֵם בַּתְּהוֹמוֹת כַּמָּדְבָּר :		3	3	3
	Total, v. 9		7	= 4 + 3	= 0 + 7
	Strophe 4 Total, v. 8-9		13	= 7 + 6	= 0 + 13
10	וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵם מִיַּד שׁוֹנְאֵה^	11	3	3	3
	וַיַּנְאֲלֵם מִיַּד אוֹיֵב :		3	3	3
	Total, v. 10		6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
11	וַיַּכְסּוּ־מִיָּם צָרֵיהֶם^	12	3	3	3
	אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא נִוְתָּר :		4	4	4
	Total, v. 11		7	= 3 + 4	= 0 + 7
	Total, v. 8-11		26	= 13 + 13	= 0 + 26
12	וַיֹּאמִינוּ בְּדַבְּרֵיךָ^	13	2	2	2
	וַיִּשְׁירוּ תְהַלֵּלתוֹ :		2	2	2
	Total, v. 12		4	= 2 + 2	= 0 + 4
	Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12		17	= 8 + 9	= 0 + 17
	Canto II Total, v. 8-12		30	= 15 + 15	= 0 + 30
	Total, v. 1-12		86	= 51 + 35	= 0 + 86
13	Vs. 13–33, מִהָרָו שִׁכְחוּ מַעֲשָׂיו^	14	3	3	3
	Central section: לֹא־חָבּוּ לַעֲצָתוֹ :		3	3	3
	Israel's apostasy in the desert Total, v. 13		6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
	Total, v. 11-13		17	= 8 + 9	= 6 + 11
14	וַיִּתְּאוּ תַאֲוָה בַּמִּדְבָּר^	15	3	3	3
	וַיִּנְסוּ־אֶל בִּישְׁמוֹן :		3	3	3
	Total, v. 14		6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
15	וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם שְׂאֵלָתָם^	16	3	3	3
	וַיִּשְׁלַח רוֹזוֹן בְּנִפְשָׁם :		3	3	3
	Total, v. 15		6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
	Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-15		18	= 9 + 9	= 18 + 0

16	וַיִּקְנְאוּ לְמֹשֶׁה בַּמַּחְנֶה <sup>א</sup>	17	3	3	3
	לְאַהֲרֹן קְדוֹשׁ יְהוָה:		3		3
17	הַפֹּתַח־אֶרֶץ וַתִּבְלַע דִּתָּן <sup>א</sup>	18	4	4	4
	וַתִּכַּסּ עַל־עֵדֶת אֲבִירָם:		4		4
18	וַתִּבְעַר־אֵשׁ בְּעֶדְתָם <sup>א</sup>	19	3	3	3
	לְהָקִיחַ תִּלְהַט רָשָׁעִים:		3		3
Strophe 7 Total, v. 16-18			20 = 10 + 10 = 20 + 0		
Total, v. 15-18			26 = 13 + 13 = 26 + 0		
Canto III Total, v. 13-18			38 = 19 + 19 = 38 + 0		
Cantos II-III Total, v. 8-18			68 = 34 + 34 = 38 + 30		
19	יַעֲשׂוּ־עֹגֶל בַּחֲרָב <sup>א</sup>	20	3	3	3
	וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַמִּסְכָּה:		2		2
	Total, v. 19		5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0		
20	וַיִּמְירוּ אֶת־כַּבֹּדָם <sup>א</sup>	21	3	3	3
	בְּתִבְנִית שׂוֹר אֲכָל עֵשָׂב:		4		4
	Total, v. 20		7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0		
Strophe 8 Total, v. 19-20			12 = 6 + 6 = 12 + 0		
21	שָׁכְחוּ אֵל מוֹשִׁיעֵם <sup>א</sup>	22	3	3	3
	עֲשֵׂה גְדִלוֹת בְּמִצְרַיִם:		3		3
	Total, v. 21		6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0		
22	נִפְלְאוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ חָם <sup>א</sup>	23	3	3	3
	נוֹרְאוֹת עַל־יַם־סוּף:		4		4
	Total, v. 22		7 = 3 + 4 = 7 + 0		
Strophe 9 Total, v. 21-22			13 = 6 + 7 = 13 + 0		
Cantic IV.1 Total, v. 19-22			25 = 12 + 13 = 25 + 0		
Total, v. 1-22			149 = 82 + 67 = 63 + 86		
23	Middle 17 words: וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַשְׁמִידָם	24	2	2	2
	315 = 149 + 17 + 149 לֹלֵי מֹשֶׁה בַּחֲרִירוֹ		3		3
	Middle word: 157+1+157 עַמֵּד בַּפֶּרֶץ לִפְנֵי <sup>א</sup>	25	3	3	3
	לְהָשִׁיב חֲמָתוֹ מִהַשְׁחִית:		3		3
24	Middle verselines: וַיִּמְאָסוּ בְּאֶרֶץ חֲמִדָּה <sup>א</sup>	26	3	3	3
	50 = 24 + 2 + 24 לא־הֶאֱמִינוּ לְדַבְּרוֹ: [25-26]		3		3
	Mid. cola: 104 = 51 + 2 + 51 [26] Total, v. 24		6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0		
Strophe 10 Total, v. 23-24			17 = 11 + 6 = 17 + 0		
25	וַיִּרְגְּנוּ בְּאַהֲלֵיהֶם <sup>א</sup>	27	2	2	2
	לֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה:		4		4
	Total, v. 25		6 = 2 + 4 = 6 + 0		
26	וַיִּשָּׂא יָדוֹ לָהֶם <sup>א</sup>	28	3	3	3
	לְהַפִּיל אוֹתָם בַּמִּדְבָּר:		3		3
	Total, v. 26		6 = 3 + 3 = 6 + 0		
27	וּלְהַפִּיל זֶרְעָם בְּגוֹיִם <sup>א</sup>	29	3	3	3
	וּלְזַרְוֹתָם בְּאַרְצוֹת:		2		2
	Total, v. 27		5 = 3 + 2 = 5 + 0		
Strophe 11 Total, v. 25-27			17 = 8 + 9 = 17 + 0		
Cantic IV.2 Total, v. 23-27			34 = 19 + 15 = 34 + 0		
Canto IV Total, v. 19-27			59 = 31 + 28 = 59 + 0		

28	וַיִּצְמְדוּ לְבַעַל פְּעוֹרָֽה׃ וַיֹּאכְלוּ זִבְחֵי מֵתִים׃ Total, v. 28	30	3	3	3			
			3		3	3		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 6	+ 0	
29	וַיִּכְעִסוּ בְּמַעַל לַיהוָה׃ וַתִּפְרֹץ־בָּם מִגִּפָּה׃ Total, v. 29	31	2	2	2			
			3		3	3		
			5	= 2	+ 3	= 5	+ 0	
	Strophe 12 Total, v. 28-29		11	= 5	+ 6	= 11	+ 0	
30	וַיַּעֲמֵד פִּינֹחָס וַיַּפְלֵֽל׃ וַתַּעֲצֹר הַמִּגִּפָּה׃ Total, v. 30	32	3	3	3			
			2		2	2		
			5	= 3	+ 2	= 5	+ 0	
31	וַתִּחַשֵּׁב לוֹ לַצִּדְקָה׃ לְדֹר וָדֹר עַד־עוֹלָם׃ Total, v. 31	33	3	3	3			
			4		4	4		
			7	= 3	+ 4	= 7	+ 0	
	Strophe 13 Total, v. 30-31		12	= 6	+ 6	= 12	+ 0	
32	וַיִּקְצִיפוּ עַל־מִי מְרִיבָה׃ וַיִּרַע לְמִשָּׁה בַּעֲבוּרָם׃ Total, v. 32	34	4	4	4			
			3		3	3		
			7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0	
33	כִּי־תִמְרוּ אֶת־רוּחוֹ׃ וַיִּבְטֹא בִשְׁפָתָיו׃ Total, v. 33	35	4	4				4
			2		2	2		
			6	= 4	+ 2	= 6	+ 0	
	Strophe 14 Total, v. 32-33		13	= 8	+ 5	= 13	+ 0	
	Canto V Total, v. 28-33		36	= 19	+ 17	= 36	+ 0	
	Central section: Israel's apostasy v. 13-33		133	= 69	+ 64	= 133	+ 0	
34	לֹא־הִשְׁמִידוּ אֶת־הָעַמִּים׃ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה לָהֶם׃ Total, v. 34	36	4	4				4
			4		4	4		
			8	= 4	+ 4	= 0	+ 8	
35	וַיִּתְעַרְבוּ בְּגוֹיִם׃ וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם׃ Total, v. 35	37	2	2				2
			2		2	2		
			4	= 2	+ 2	= 0	+ 4	
36	וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֶת־עֲצֻבֵיהֶם׃ וַיִּהְיוּ לָהֶם לְמוֹקֵשׁ׃ Total, v. 36	38	3	3				3
			3		3	3		
			6	= 3	+ 3	= 0	+ 6	
	Strophe 15 Total, v. 34-36		18	= 9	+ 9	= 0	+ 18	
37	I take vs. 37-38 as two tricollic verselines	39	3	3				3
38a	וַיִּזְבְּחוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֵיהֶם לְשָׂדִים׃		3	3				3
38b**	וַיִּשְׁפְּכוּ דָם נָקִי		3	3				3
38c**	דָּם־בְּנֵיהֶם וּבְנוֹתֵיהֶם	40	3	3				3
38d	אֲשֶׁר זָבְחוּ לַעֲצֻבֵי כְנָעַן׃ וַתִּחַנֵּף הָאָרֶץ בְּדָמִים׃ Total, v. 38		4	4				4
			3		3	3		
			13	= 10	+ 3	= 0	+ 13	
39	וַיִּטְמְאוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם׃ וַיִּזְנוּ בְּמַעַל לַיהוָה׃ Total, v. 39	41	2	2				2
			2		2	2		
			4	= 2	+ 2	= 0	+ 4	
	Strophe 16 Total, v. 37-39		23	= 18	+ 5	= 0	+ 23	
	Canto VI Total, v. 34-39		41	= 27	+ 14	= 0	+ 41	

40		42	4	4	4
	וַיִּתְּרֵם אֶף יְהוָה בְּעֲמֹוֹ		3	3	3
	וַיִּתְּעַב אֶת־נִחְלָתוֹ:		7	= 4 + 3 = 0 + 7	
	Total, v. 40				
41		43	3	3	3
	וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּיַד־גּוֹיִם		3	3	3
	וַיִּמְשְׁלוּ בָּהֶם שְׂנֵאִיהֶם:		6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
	Total, v. 41				
42		44	2	2	2
	וַיִּלְחָצוּם אוֹיְבֵיהֶם		3	3	3
	וַיִּכְנְעוּ תַּחַת יָדָם:		5	= 2 + 3 = 0 + 5	
	Total, v. 42				
	Strophe 17 Total, v. 40-42		18	= 9 + 9 = 0 + 18	
43		45	3	3	3
	בְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת יִצְיִלֻם		3	3	3
	וַחֲמָה יִמְרוּ בַּעֲצָתָם		2	2	2
	וַיִּמְכּוּ בַּעֲוֹנָם:		8	= 6 + 2 = 0 + 8	
	Total, v. 43				
	Total, v. 40-43		26	= 15 + 11 = 0 + 26	
44		46	3	3	3
	וַיֵּרָא בַּצֹּר לָהֶם		3	3	3
	בְּשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת־רִנָּתָם:		6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
	Total, v. 44				
	Strophe 18 Total, v. 43-44		14	= 9 + 5 = 0 + 14	
45		47	3	3	3
	וַיִּזְכֹּר לָהֶם בְּרִיתוֹ		3	3	3
	וַיִּנָּחֵם כְּרַב חֲסִדּוֹ:		6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
	Total, v. 45				
46		48	3	3	3
	וַיִּתֵּן אוֹתָם לְרַחֲמִים		3	3	3
	לִפְנֵי כָל־שׁוֹבֵיהֶם:		6	= 3 + 3 = 0 + 6	
	Total, v. 46				
	Strophe 19 Total, v. 45-46		12	= 6 + 6 = 0 + 12	
	Total, v. 43-46		26	= 15 + 11 = 0 + 26	
	Total, v. 34-46		85	= 51 + 34 = 0 + 85	
	Total, v. 28-46		121	= 70 + 51 = 36 + 85	
	Total, v. 1-46		304	= 171 + 133 = 133 + 171	
47	Coda	49	3	3	3
	הוֹשִׁיעֵנו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ		3	3	3
	וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן־חַגּוּזִים		3	3	3
	לְהַדּוֹת לְשֵׁם קְדֹשְׁךָ	50	3	3	3
	לְהַשְׁתַּבַּח בְּתִהְלִיתְךָ:		2	2	2
	Strophe 20 Total, v. 47		11	= 9 + 2 = 0 + 11	
	Total, v. 46-47		17	= 12 + 5 = 0 + 17	
	Canto VII Total, v. 40-47		55	= 33 + 22 = 0 + 55	
	Total, v. 23-47		166	= 98 + 68 = 70 + 96	
	Total, excluding the doxology, v. 1-47		315	= 180 + 135 = 133 + 182	
48a-c	Doxology	51	4	4	4
	בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל		4	4	4
	מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם		4	4	4
	וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן		12	= 12 + 0 = 0 + 12	
	Strophe 21 Total, v. 48c				
	Total, v. 1-48c		327	= 192 + 135 = 133 + 194	
48d			2	= 2 + 0 = 0 + 2	
	הַלְלוּ־יָהּ:				
	Including the 2 hallelu-yahs: Total, v. 1-48d		330	= 195 + 135 = 133 + 197	

\* In v. 7, I see no cogent reason for emending the text by reading עֲלִיּוֹן, 'Most High', instead of עַל־יָם, 'by the sea'. Apart from the fact that the use of עֲלִיּוֹן as referring to YHWH in a prayer is highly improbable, the loss of one word would disturb the meticulously designed numerical structure of the text.

\*\* The same applies to the 7 words in v. 38 b-c, which many scholars delete as a gloss (see BHS). However, with Fokkelman, I take vs. 37-38 as two tricollic verselines, a case of enjambement. Van der Lugt deletes the 'gloss' and finds two bicolic verselines in vs. 37-38.

## Observations

1. For the stereotyped call to praise at the beginning and end of the psalm, see Observation 1 in my Analysis of [Psalm 104](#), where we find the first *hallelu-yah*. My logotechnical analysis concerns the psalm proper excluding this phrase as well as the doxology (v. 48), which do not strictly belong to the body of the poem. The psalm proper consists of 315 words arranged in 50 verselines with **104** (4 x 26) cola. In terms of its 315 words, the arithmetic centre of the poem is constituted by the **17** words in [vs. 23-24](#) ( $315 = 149 + 17 + 149$ ):

וַיֹּאמֶר לְהַשְׁמִידֵם לִוְלֵי מֹשֶׁה בְּחִירוֹ  
עֹמֵד בַּפֶּרֶץ לִפְנֵיָי לְהָשִׁיב חֲמָתוֹ מִהַשְׁחִית:  
וַיִּמָּאֲסוּ בָאֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּהּ לֹא־הֶאֱמִינוּ לְדִבְרוֹ:

So he purposed to destroy them, had not Moses, his chosen one,  
stood in the breach before him // to prevent his wrath from destroying them.  
But they despised the pleasant land // having no faith in his promise.

The pivotal position of the arithmetic centre on word level is reinforced on three levels: by the middle word, the middle verselines ( $24 + 2 + 24$ ), and the middle cola (**51** + **2** + **51**). Seeing its strongly underscored central position, there can be no doubt about these **17** words being the consciously designed meaningful centre. It certainly contains the gist of the psalm, featuring the crucial themes: lack of faith on the part of Israel, YHWH's wrath and his willingness to forgive.

2. The meaningful centre is situated squarely within vs. 23-27 (Canticle IV.2), the passage composed according to the famous formula **34** = **19** + **15**, which we encountered in Ps. 105: 40-44 and will meet again in the verses marked by the inverted nun in Psalm 107:23-26 + 40. See Observation 6 in my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#). This renders Ps. 106:23-27 a well-defined, indivisible literary unit, which should by all means be kept intact in the search for the boundaries of the literary components.

Starting from this passage, we can proceed to discover the overall structure of the psalm. The key to understanding its framework lies in the correct identification of the various literary units surrounding this fixed centre. A great help in establishing their boundaries is the clear geographic references to distinct episodes that occurred during the time from the sojourn in Egypt to the settlement in Canaan. This means that Psalm 106 is an episodic poem, like Psalms 105 and 107. There are *seven* geographic references, with **Mount Horeb** at the centre:

*Egypt and the Red Sea* (vs. 6-12)

*The Desert* (vs. 13-18)

**Horeb** (vs. 19-27) Egypt, Red Sea, land, and desert explicitly mentioned

*Baal Peor and Meriba* (vs. 28-33), and

*Canaan* (vs. 34-46).

Additionally, there is the incontestable literary unit in the form of a *prayer*, [vs. 4-7](#), which is another indivisible passage. And of course, there is the concluding *prayer*, [v. 47](#), which is clearly a coda, as in Ps. 105:45.



Finally, there are two larger sections that are significantly determined by the number **17**:  
 vs. 8-18, with **68** (4 x **17**) words linking vs. 8-12 and vs. 13-18, and  
 vs. 34-46, with **85** (5 x **17**) words linking vs. 34-39 and vs. 40-46.

In light of these considerations, the following major caesuras emerge:

vs. **3 || 4, 7 || 8, 12 || 13, 18 || 19, 22 || 23, 27 || 28, and 33 || 34.**

They mark the various literary units that form the basis on which I divide the poem. The layout is very reminiscent of Psalm 105:

vs. 1-3	Call to praise God for his love despite Israel's unfaithfulness
vs. 4-7	The introductory prayer, confession of sins and profession of faith
vs. 8-12	The <i>Red Sea</i> episode: confirmation of the faith of the fathers in God
vs. 13-18	The <i>Desert</i> episode: a prelude to apostasy
vs. 19-22	The <i>Horeb</i> episode: the epitome of apostasy, inevitably causing:
vs. 23-27	YHWH's wrath, because of Israel's rejection of the promised land
vs. 28-33	The <i>Baal-Peor</i> and <i>Meriba</i> episodes: additional examples of apostasy
vs. 34-39	The <i>Canaan</i> episode: idolatry and its disastrous consequences
vs. 40-46	Israel in exile: YHWH judged his people, but relented and took pity
vs. 47	Coda: concluding prayer for salvation and restoration.

The central section, dealing with Israel's **apostasy in the desert**, stands out (Column c). In terms of logotechnique, the core is enveloped by **182** (7 x **26**) words (Column d). Close reading reveals that both parts of this 182-word framework, vs. 1-12 and 34-46, mention the danger of apostasy and its consequences (6-7 and 34-39). They also very explicitly mention Israel's faith in YHWH's *words* (v. 12), in his *salvation* (vs. 8-11), and in his compassion based on his covenantal love (vs. 43-46). The symbolism of the **182** (7 x **26**) words surrounding the central section may express the idea that Israel's dark record of apostasy is encapsulated in YHWH's presence among his people through his name.

In v. 47 we find a coda containing a concluding prayer. For my use of the term *coda*, see Observation 5 in my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#).

3. The above course layout of the text can in more detail be divided into **7** cantos with the Horeb episode at the centre. Though they do not form a concentric menorah pattern, the seven units are nevertheless plausible, since the literary units are carefully kept intact:

Canto I	vs. 1-7	3 strophes	8 verselines	<b>17</b> cola	56 words
Canto II	vs. 8-12	2 strophes	5 verselines	10 cola	30 words +
Canto III	vs. 13-18	2 strophes	6 verselines	12 cola	38 words = <b>68</b>
<b>Canto IV</b>	<b>vs. 19-27</b>	<b>4 strophes</b>	<b>10 verselines</b>	<b>20 cola</b>	<b>59 words</b>
Canto V	vs. 28-33	3 strophes	6 verselines	12 cola	36 words
Canto VI	vs. 34-39	2 strophes	6 verselines	14 cola	41 words
Canto VII	vs. 40-47	4 strophes	9 verselines	19 cola	55 words
Doxology	v. 48	1 strophe	1 verseline	3 cola	12 words

This menorah pattern is not free from a measure of subjectivity, since Canto I can easily be split into two cantos, and others can be combined. This also applies to Christensen's rather artificial 'nested' menorah pattern (on page 11 of his Analysis). See my critical remarks on this kind of 'menorah' and on the prerequisites for identifying a genuine, deliberately designed menorah, in Observation 4 of my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#).



4. Apart from the divine name numbers appearing in connection with the meaningful centre (Observation 1) these numbers are woven into the fabric of the text as follows:
- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| vs. 8-11  | <b>26</b> words in total  |
| vs. 10-12 | <b>17</b> words in total  |
| vs. 1-12  | <b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) words before atnach  |
| vs. 11-13 | <b>17</b> words in total  |
| vs. 15-18 | <b>26</b> words in total  |
| vs. 8-18  | <b>68</b> words, with <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) before and <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) after atnach |
| vs. 23-24 | <b>17</b> words in total  |
| vs. 25-27 | <b>17</b> words in total  |
| vs. 28-33 | <b>17</b> words after atnach  |
| vs. 40-43 | <b>26</b> words, with <b>15</b> (YH) before and <b>11</b> (WH) after atnach                         |
| vs. 43-46 | <b>26</b> words, with <b>15</b> (YH) before and <b>11</b> (WH) after atnach                         |
| vs. 34-46 | <b>85</b> words, with <b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) before and <b>34</b> (2 x <b>17</b> ) after atnach |
| vs. 28-46 | <b>51</b> (3 x <b>17</b> ) words after atnach   |
| vs. 46-47 | <b>17</b> words in total  |
| vs. 23-47 | <b>68</b> (4 x <b>17</b> ) words after atnach   |
| vs. 1-47  | <b>182</b> (7 x <b>26</b> ) words in the framework.   |
5. The name יהוה occurs 8 times in the psalm itself (7x in Cantos I-VII: vs. 1a, 2a, 4a, 16b, 25b, 34b, 40a, and 1x in the concluding prayer, v. 47). It also occurs 1x in the doxology. The name יה appears 2x: once in each of the two *hallelu-yahs*.

© 2011  
 Dr. C.J. Labuschagne    Senior Lecturer in Semitic Languages (retired),  
    Brinkhorst 44    University of Pretoria, South Africa  
 9751 AT Haren (Gron)    and  
    The Netherlands    Professor of Old Testament (retired),  
[labuschagne.cj@planet.nl](mailto:labuschagne.cj@planet.nl)    University of Groningen, The Netherlands